

Sergey Biryukov, Andrew Kovalenko

**Eastern Europe:
euroscepticism, right-wing conservative trend
and the problem of the national choice**

Contemporary debates about the fate of "Greater Europe", coupled with large-scale debate about how to save the "Euro zone" and the creation of a new pan-European "financial-political" mechanism stirred up public opinion in Europe. On the background of these discussions becomes clear the widening gap between the aspirations of European elites and civil societies of European countries. If the "elite of the EU" more leaning towards strengthen the elements of centralization in the management of a common European economy and finance (project, which lobbied by Germany, supported by France), among much of the population of European countries spread sentiments in the spirit of euroscepticism. Applied to European policy there is reason to talk about the complex political crisis, which manifestations is the crisis of confidence and legitimacy crisis (primarily EU institutions and elites); crisis of participation (as evidenced by the manifestation of absenteeism on the European elections) and the crisis of penetration (in connection with the difficulty of implementing pan-European ideas and projects). In a broader context, there is a crisis as a pan-European idea and identity crisis and EU institutions and mechanisms. In this regard, with particular urgency and severity raises the question of the fate of Eastern Europe and its possible role in the context of the European crisis.

The Eastern Europe still has not well-established international definition and clear geographical boundaries. "Definitions of Eastern Europe are so many as many the as researchers of the region," - says the team of authors in one of the most authoritative studies on this issue¹. In turn, the Czech geopolitics O. Krejci proves that this region has no natural geopolitical boundaries, and his name is pronounced political connotation². However, some objective basis for allocating special "Eastern European community" still exist.

Eastern Europe for us - is, above all, the unity of fate, history, mentality and traditions, a special geopolitical space, the fates decreed until today has not gained their full geopolitical subjectivity. As noted Belarusian political analyst I.Y. Levyash who offering to introduce to mean "Eastern European", the term "Central Europe", deep in the scale of a few generations, mutations eventually formed the image of Central Europe - not the West, not the East, as a kind of historical, political economy, and the socio-cultural reality geostrategic Central European family of nations. As rightly pointed Levyash for Central and Eastern Europe, the choice is small, or create dozens of new small states - ethnic groups, and the

¹ "The Balkans", Global Perspectives: A Remote Sensing and World Issues Site. Wheeling Jesuit University / Center for Educational Technologies, 1999–2002.

² См.: *Krejčí O.* Geopolitics of the Central European Region. The view from Prague and Bratislava. Bratislava, 2005.

inevitable price of such "great redistribution" - lot of blood, or to ensure the stability and the free development of all ethnic groups in the nations - states. Multi-ethnic nationalism - is civil peace and the possibility of international balance of interests; Ethnic - the civil war and the European scramble "all against all"³.

It should be noted that the integration projects in Eastern (Central) Europe in some single political entity to defend common interests were put forward for a long time. Conceptually, these projects were opposed the idea of Pan-Europe, whose adherents were some members of the elite formed within the Versailles system of the new independent states. Suffice it to recall the book one of the "founding fathers" of Czechoslovakia Masaryk⁴ "New Europe", inspired by the famous "14 points" of Woodrow Wilson.

Results of the Second World War made any discussion about the creation of a "mid-European" alliance of "small" states irrelevant, and the post-war division of Europe on "bloc" principle has driven this topic "underground." Only after the liberalization in Eastern Europe since the second half the 50s of the twentieth century began the revival of interest to the problem of "Mitteleuropa".

As a result "Middle Europe" was considered from the beginning of the 70s as a space in conceptually oriented on Vienna as a historical and cultural center for the nations once forming part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Within this conventional space could be seen the cultural and economic union of regions, ethnic groups, and the Central European cities connected by a common history of being the part of Austria-Hungary⁵.

And it was no coincidence that the movement for the revival of "Central Europe" began in the 80s of the last century in the Czech Republic and Hungary, where it was rooted awareness of their own "middle", as the representatives of these peoples were part of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire. Discussions about the Central Europe were a reaction to the division of Europe, to the illusory world that existed in the shadow of nuclear weapons, as well as two European permanent confrontation "worlds" divided along ideological lines.

Discussion of those years, which led actively M. Kundera, G. Konrad, V. Havel, C. Milosz, D. Kish, M. Simeska and other prominent Eastern European intellectuals, was mainly focused on the definition of the spiritual and political borders of Central Europe, separating it from the East. They also discussed the role of Russia and its relations with Europe. And almost all participants in the debate agree that the division of Europe can not be overcome without overcoming the division of Germany. At the same time raised the question of "cultural-civilizational" self-determination in Eastern Europe in the framework of the "Wider Europe"⁶.

³ См.: *Леваш И. Я.* Средняя Европа: структура и геополитический выбор // Полис. Политические исследования. 1995. № 1. С. 64.

⁴ См.: *Geier W.* Europabilder. Begriffe, Ideen, Projekte aus 2500 Jahren. Wien: Promedia, 2009. S. 141–145.

⁵ *Wolff-Poweska A.* Mitteleuropa – Das gelobte land? // Deutsche Studien. 1988. № 103. S. 265–283.

⁶ См.: Старое литературное обозрение. 2001. № 1.

The fall of the Berlin Wall, the output of the Eastern European sphere of influence of the Soviet Union and its almost "triumphant" return to Europe to the time removed these problems into the background. However, since the mid 2000s, the countries of Eastern Europe have entered into a unique era of "political turbulence." Various manifestations of political instability swept all these states. The turning point in this respect was the 2006 which is remembered with prolonged government crisis in the Czech Republic and Poland, mass riot in Hungary, came to power in Poland and Slovakia coalitions with right-wing radical parties. Although the growth rate of the economies of a number of Central European countries is still somewhat higher than in most of Western Europe, they are reduced, increasing inflation, the financial system of states are unstable (if not on the verge of collapse), and political life is regularly shaken by new crises and scandals with corruption and other disclosures. Several countries in the region are experiencing the effects of social degradation due process of deindustrialization and disintegration associated with the former (Socialist) industrial way of social infrastructure, which deprives them the chance for a successful economic modernization in the foreseeable future.

Thus, there is every reason to speak of a "systemic crisis" of Eastern European States, affecting all major aspects of society, politics, economics, ideology and foreign policy sphere. By the early 2000s, Eastern European societies have achieved in the development the famous "ceiling modernization", when the first wave of liberal reforms 90s exhausted its effects, not bringing many Eastern European state welfare expects. That time the lack of resources for further reform and growth disappointment in society actually made it unlikely a new phase of liberal reforms. As a result all the Eastern European elites were careful to hold further market reforms, but have become increasingly popular calls to go back to revise the entire strategy of socio-economic development. To power came the groups, claiming that Central Europe has made mistakes in choosing a strategy of economic reform on unfavorable and unequal conditions of joining the EU and NATO. It confirms the dramatic character of the signing of the text "Lisbon Treaty" by Czech President V. Klaus. He does not put his signature under it to make the necessary changes in the Constitution and the Constitutional Court, stating that "the Czech Republic has lost its sovereignty." It, therefore, is not only a loss of confidence, but also a crisis of European integration mechanisms. Residents of Central and Eastern Europe all the more consciously reject the model of the European Union, based on the principle of subsidiarity, which involves the transfer of powers to the regional and supranational levels. It makes unnecessary the layer of national bureaucracy, which raises the inevitable conflicts⁷.

Unexpected results brought with it "reideologization" of the 1990s and the liberation of "communist legacy." Instead deideologization and triumph of liberal values in CEE happens all the deeper value-ideological "rollback." Dumping "the yoke of communism," Eastern European countries wanted to "return to Europe" to

⁷ *Неменский О. Б.* Европейские нации и кризис системы международных отношений // Вопросы национализма. 2010. № 4. С. 80.

traditional Christian values and identity. This particular "Europeanism" was inextricably linked for them with conservatism and nationalism, traditionalist morality and a strong national government. Eastern Europe has not accepted the liberal and postmodern "end of history", trying to offer their own vision of "All-European values."

Taking into account certain preconditions above, necessary to pay attention to the specifics of the political and social base of the designated East European nationalism. The emergence in the region in the early 90s the new national states, independent from the USSR, could be called the "second national revival" (starting from 1789). Such a resurgence of ethno-national consciousness due to liberalization and democratization has led to the formation during the 1990-1992 17 new states to which in 2006 was added Montenegro.

At the same time manifested a certain specificity of the process of nation-building in Eastern Europe. All Central European nations were created in their present form after the Second World War. In the era of "velvet revolutions" and the subsequent democratization of Eastern European States the question was not about how to reduce the role of the state, but vice versa - how to make this state more "authentic" and "national", without externally imposed forms. In 1989, the people of this part of Europe have "reinstated" their state on the new "national-democratic" principles, changing their attitude towards it. In place of the "hidden negation" of imposed from "outside" national-state plate comes civic patriotism, which now becomes a necessary feature of good citizen⁸.

Social movements 1980-1990-ies were not so much anti-communist as national. Because of this, the "velvet revolutions" in the CEE countries were perceived not only as a "peaceful penetration" of citizens to democracy, but primarily as a symbolic act of returning them their "own" national states. Before the crisis of the mid-2000s motives of civil and national political revival were in a state of conditional "equilibrium". However, described earlier crises of modernization and growth of euroscepticism in Eastern European countries led to the actualization precisely a national component in the political consciousness of the citizens of these states. The extreme epitome of this process became the ethnic nationalism.

Moreover, for a number of Eastern European countries today it is typical revival of ethnic nationalism based on ethnic and cultural understanding of the nation as a political unity of a particular ethnic group. The latter implies the implementation of the strategy of "politicization of ethnicity" and also attempt of dissolving within the framework of ethnic nation all intermediate ethnic and linguistic groups, including ethnic minorities. Modern "right-wing conservative trend" in the CEE countries is associated with the abandonment of the construction of civil nations in favor of the construction of Ethno nations, that has certain preconditions in their national history.

⁸ См.: *Неменский О. Б.* Бархатные национальные революции: революции в национальном сознании // Вопросы национализма. 2011. № 7. С. 59–61.

If we look at the ethnic map of Eastern Europe, we will see that here presented more or less ethnically homogeneous formation, projecting the image of "significant other» (they-group) on ethnic minorities in their own country and neighboring countries. Because of this nationalism in some of the Eastern European countries gets an integral character, that creates preconditions for a sufficiently deep transformation of their political systems (it is the case in today's Hungary).

Along with this, many experts are concerned the trend towards a "rollback to the right", strengthening the elements of authoritarianism in the political systems of a number of Eastern European States. "National-oriented" and "paternalistic" authoritarian elites of some Eastern European countries consider it as almost the only mean of consolidating nations and resolve almost all of current problems.

Preconditions of rise right-conservative forces in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe in the period c 1990-2000-ies are:

- 1) Force the "de-Sovietization" 90s, opened opportunities for the revival of right-wing conservative ideology to challenge both liberal and social-democratic ideology;

- 2) persists in many CEE countries a strong national-conservative tradition, which found its expression in the work of new and restored "radical right" and "right-populist" parties;

- 3) the actual failure of socio-economic reforms and the process of modernization in many of the CEE countries in the 1990s, which contributed to the growth of popularity objectively wing conservative forces, including the populist and eurosceptic wing;

- 4) a heightened perception of the negative effects of globalization and European integration, feeling significant part of the population of Eastern European countries in the position of "pariahs" and "rogue" in the framework of the "European project" taking into account the dramatic historical experiences of these peoples in the twentieth century. That promotes the growth of sentiment in spirit of nationalism and isolationism;

- 5) The discontent of the ruling elites in CEE countries included in the "European integration project," and the consequent activation of contrelite groups (including the "right") desired on the right-populist wave press the ruling European-biased elite.

Eventually all occurring today in Eastern Europe processes deserve undoubted interest, as connected with the search for the Eastern European actors strategies of development, alternative defined "old Europe" agenda. Searching this alternative is only reaction of Eastern Europe to the present crisis "value grounds" of the project of European integration and the deepening crisis in Eastern European countries themselves. You can also see in these endeavors attempt to "value-ideological revenge" on the part of the East European elites, who are now trying to "rewrite history" and overcome the current "secondary status" of their states. The latter also involves their actual refusal to participate in the project of building a "liberal Europe" that threatens the destruction of a single value-ideological, political, legal and socio-economic space of the "united Europe".

